

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMCONSUL ZAGREB

UNCLAS BELGRADE 7929

FOR CU/ARTS

EO 11652 NA

TAGS: SCUL YO

SUBJ: LAPO VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA

1. LAPO VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA GREAT ARTISTIC SUCCESS. SOLD OUT HOUSES IN ZAGREB AND BELGRADE GREETED MEHTA AND ORCHESTRA WITH PROLONGED APPLAUSE. ORCHESTRA RESPONDED TO ENTHUSIASM OF CROWD BY PERFORMING TWO ENCORES, INCLUDING STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER WHICH PROVOKED ANOTHER SUSTAINED ROUND OF APPLAUSE. INITIAL CRITICAL COMMENTS HIGHLY FAVORABLE AND MORE DETAILED REVIEWS EXPECTED DURING COMING WEEK. LAPO DEPARTED BELGRADE ON SCHEDULE FOR SOFIA DECEMBER 5. VISIT EFFEKTIVELY SUPPORTED BICENTENNIAL AND CPP OBJECTIVE VII.

2. FOR GENERAL PUBLIC, LAPO VISIT AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY OTHER POINT OF VIEW, VISIT WAS NEAR DISASTER. NEARLY EVERYTHING THAT COULD HAVE GONE WRONG WENT WRONG. FROM THE MINUTE THE PLANE TOUCHED DOWN IN ZAGREB UNTIL THE DEPARTURE FOR SOFIA, THERE WAS CHAOS AT EVERY TURN. IN SPITE OF OVER A YEAR'S PREPARATION, IT BECAME IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS

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PROMISED BY THE ZAGREB SPONSOR WERE EXECUTED

IN MOST HAPHAZARD MANNER BY AN INDIVIDUAL WHO, CHARITABLY, CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS INCOMPETENT. TO WIT: NO LUGGAGE TRUCK FOR PERSONAL BAGGAGE AT AIRPORT; TWO PORTERS TO HANDLE THE BAGS OF 117 MUSICIANS; NO ARRANGEMENTS FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE AND PASSPORT CONTROL IN SPITE OF REPEATED ASSURANCES THAT ALL OF THESE DETAILS HAD BEEN ARRANGED. WELL OVER TWO HOURS AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT AT ZAGREB, THE LAST BUS DEPARTED FOR THE HOTEL WHERE ANOTHER ONE HOUR DELAY ENSUED WHILE ROOMS WERE ASSIGNED AND KEYS DISTRIBUTED.

3. THE SITUATION IN BELGRADE WAS LITTLE BETTER. THERE WAS CONFUSION AT TH AIRPORT, NEAR REVOLT AT THE PARK HOTEL WHERE A LARGE NUMBER OF THE MUSICIANS REFUSED TO STAY; COMPLAINTS ABOUT INADEQUATE PER DIEMS BOTH IN BELGRADE AND ZAGREB; AND LOGISTICAL COMPLICATIONS WHICH ALL BUT OVERWHELMED JUGOKONCERT. ALL OF THIS IN SPITE OF WRITTEN AGREEMENTS, CONFIRMATION OF DETAILS, AND REPEATED, REGULAR CHECKS BY EMBASSY THAT ALL WAS IN ORDER.

4. INADEQUATE ARRANGEMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA ONLY PART OF LARGER AND FAR MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM REGARDING OVERALL TOUR ORGANIZATION. WITH SO MANY INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR VARIOUS ASPECTS OF VISIT, RESULTING PROBLEMS WERE AS PREDICTABLE AS THEY WERE INEVITABLE. SHOULD THERE BE NEXT TIME, THIS POST SUGGESTS THAT AN UNDERTAKING AS COMPLEX AND COMPLICATED AS AN ORCHESTRA TOUR BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY BY COMPETENT EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS WITH AN ADEQUATE BUDGET TO DO THE JOB. THE UNFORTUNATE PROBLEMS WHICH PLAGUED THIS TOUR OFFER COMPELLING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS SUGGESTION.
SILBERMAN

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